



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte NC on January 12, 2016 at 6 p.m.

## PRC MINUTES January 12, 2016

### **ATTENDANCE**

#### **PRC Present:**

Elaine Powell, Chair  
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair  
 Tristan McMannis, Exec. Secretary  
 Mary Foxx Johnson  
 Doug Burnett  
 John Leonard  
 Ed Barnhart  
 Aubin Guinness  
 Abe Early  
 Heidi Pruess  
 Brian Cox  
 Sterling Martin, Jr.  
 Tony Arreaza  
 Jim Garges  
 Michael Kirschman

#### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Chair Powell welcomed all to the January, 2016 PRC meeting and asked each Commissioner/Staff person to introduce themselves.

#### **Public:**

Chair Powell recognized **Rich Little**. Rich Little, President of Myers Park Trinity Little League, came before the Park and Recreation Commission to express the need for additional athletic fields in the uptown corridor (from Uptown, down Central Avenue/Plaza Midwood, through Independence Boulevard, South and back up to Park Road). Mr. Little shared that his non-profit organization has made significant investments towards improvements to the available fields, including lighting and irrigation, but with 3500 to 4000 kids to serve in this area and participation in their organization alone having more than double, more fields are greatly needed. Mr. Little

encouraged the Park and Recreation Commissioners to advocate and show their support for this need to the Board of County Commissioners and to encourage funding and project prioritization.

Chair Powell recognized **Kip Kiser**. Kip Kiser, board member of both Myers Park Trinity Little League and the Charlotte Junior Soccer League, came before the PRC to express and make certain that the Park and Recreation Commission understands the need for more athletic fields in the Uptown corridor and to ask them to also advocate for this need to the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Kiser said their organizations have money and have spent money on field improvements but they do not have the kind of money it takes to buy land in this area. He felt this was important for the PRC and the BOCC to understand.

### **Program Presentation – Capital Planning:**

**Mecklenburg County Sportsplex at Matthews:** Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning gave an update on the Mecklenburg County Sportsplex at Matthews. This site of over 160 acres is a \$32 million dollar complex; (\$30 million from the County and \$2 million from the Town of Matthews) currently in Phase II of construction with Phase I having been completed in 2013. Lee shared current amenities of fields, parking, restroom building, playground and an outdoor shelter; future amenities include a championship field house with meeting rooms, locker rooms, offices, program space warming kitchen for events and an outdoor overlook of a championship field. As a regional park (not just a sports complex), the completed project will be able to accommodate a wide range of events.

As addressed during the public meetings to develop the Matthews Small Area Plan, the Town of Matthews knew the zoning for the complex would need to eventually be changed from residential to entertainment. The County will be working with the Town of Matthews on this rezoning process and will include one public meeting, a presentation to the zoning board and also to the Matthews Board of County Commissioners.

Following the presentation, questions and points of interest were addressed as follows:

**Public Concerns:** The main public concerns are environmental. To address those concerns the County has gone above and beyond the state requirements for storm water mitigation and water management in order to protect this property and the wetlands.

**Fields:** The complex will ultimately have 12 fields, 5 of which will be artificial turf.

**Economic Impact:** The economic impact from the completion of Phase II has been tremendous and will only continue as Phase II is completed.

**Regional Park Aspect:** As a regional park, the complex will also include the fields but also trails, playgrounds and picnic shelters.

**Lynx Cat Development:** The project includes the future development of a Lynx connection. Lee and Jim will be attending a meeting soon to hear a presentation on how they are going to finalize that alignment.

**Tree Harvesting:** Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, shared with the Commissioners that on this project and other large projects that require land clearing, staff from the Division go into these properties ahead of time not only to do an initial

diversity assessment but also to mark trees to cut and save to be put back into the park system in the future.

### **Appointments – Advisory Councils –Applicants**

**Central Advisory Council:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Pruess to appoint **Andrew Bowen** to an unexpired term on the Central Advisory Council, expiring in 6/2016. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

### **Director's Report**

**Welcome to New Commissioners:** Jim welcomed each of the new members to the Park and Recreation Commission; Sterling Martin, Jr. in North 2, Tony Arreaza in Central 2 and Mary Foxx Johnson in Central 1.

**Eastway Park:** As follow up to previous meetings with the Eastway community regarding Phase II of Eastway Park, the residents have made it clear they are interested in getting the second phase of this park completed sooner rather than later and have the support of members of the Board of County Commissioners. While this is good, it does mean moving this project ahead in the queue of twenty two other park projects currently waiting to begin Phase II. As a result of the most recent meeting with residents from the surrounding neighborhoods of Eastway Park, it was determined that for a Phase II, the biggest project they are most interested in is a Regional Recreation Center. This will be an interesting discussion since the 08 bond called for a Regional Recreation Center in the North. Another meeting will be held with the residents on January 25 to help them see the vision for a \$40 million dollar Regional Recreation Center and the process, which includes the operating budget for a project of this size. Staff will also continue to communicate with members of the BOCC to keep them informed and to make sure they are aware of the different implications. It is important for the Department to be very mindful when talk begins to move in the direction of changing the priority of one project over another.

Commissioner Pruess asked about the process/expectation of the PRC with regard to communicating with the BOCC in response to something of this nature; i.e., a project being shifted out of the current priority queue. Director Garges responded that he felt the best approach would be for the PRC to be well informed of the issue at hand and be able to not only answer questions from the BOCC, but also to be able to share pertinent information about the process as well as any implications. Jim felt it was best when the PRC advocated as a group.

Commissioner Leonard shared that he felt the future close proximity of light rail to Eastway Park will have an impact on economic growth in that area and asked if we had other projects that would have immediate adjacency to the light rail. Director Garges responded that the Department works closely with CATS so that we are aware of their projects and alignments and bring them in early on park project planning. On occasion the Department will purchase adjacent property to not only light rail but to a bus line as well in order to have a positive impact on good transportation to the park site.

**Waymer Center:** Director Garges provided an update on the Waymer Center, a gymnasium in Huntersville being leased to the Town of Huntersville since the early nineties. Following an assessment of the facility by the County, it was decided that due to the extensive disrepair, the building would be demolished. This led to considerable opposition from the surrounding

community which resulted in several community meetings to address concerns and consider options. As a result of these community meetings and the involvement of County management and the BOCC, it has been decided that the gymnasium will undergo a \$1.5 million dollar renovation. Next steps regarding the project are to determine when to begin the project, the design and the level of participation from the Town of Huntersville. Discussions are still being held regarding the future plans for the historic Torrence-Lytle School also located on this property. (Note: Please reference previous PRC minutes for greater detail regarding this property.)

**Second Ward Gym and Future Second Ward Park:** Director Garges provided an update on the Second Ward Gym, located adjacent to our Aquatic Center and is part of the historic African-American community of Brooklyn Village. The Department has been working with the Second Ward Alumni Association over the past two years on plans to restore the history of the gym as well as restore it for a place to offer fitness classes and other activities. This was approved last year as a Capital Project.

The County is currently in the process of reviewing three proposals to determine a master developer for the Second Ward. It is very important that the Department and the PRC remain insistent that this development include a significant park in Second Ward, similar to Romare Bearden and First Ward, as promised to the residents and previous residents of this historic area. These conversations will begin in the near future with the developer and the Department will be advocating for a balance between public space and private development. The Park and Recreation Commission will have a vital role in advocating for the right public space in Second Ward.

Chair Powell expressed her total agreement and support and said the PRC will have the opportunity to advocate to Commissioners Fuller and Clarke at the upcoming retreat.

**SPLRF Committee:** This committee, Strategic Planning and Long Range Financing (SPLRF), made up of members of the PRC will be reactivated with the purpose of looking at, among others; strategic planning, Department initiatives and project ranking. Further discussion will be held at the PRC retreat. Meeting dates will be set.

**County Strategic Plan:** The Department made a presentation to the executive team in preparation for the County Board of Commissioner's retreat. This retreat gives the Department the opportunity to present their strategic plan and how it fits into the County's plan and the themes they feel are most important for the County. The Park and Recreation Department strategic plan fits into many of those theme areas of importance collaboration with LUESA efforts, senior citizen initiatives and aging with dignity and health and fitness.

- **Achieve 225:** One initiative that will be woven into the strategic plan presentation is the participation of Park and Recreation staff in 26 schools to help facilitate physical activity during recess as part of Achieve 225 (45 minutes of activity for every student, 5 days a week) The goal is to be in 70 schools next year but this will require more funds and positions.

**CATS Bus Stop Update:** Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, gave an update on the discontinued Route 60, which serviced the Tyvola Senior Center and the Marion Diehl Recreation Center. As a result of conversations and meetings with CATS to explain the importance of this bus stop, CATS has added back two stops; one at 8:40 a.m. and one at 3:15 p.m. Staff will begin to focus more programming around these times.

**Pearle Street Park:** Director Garges recognized the value of our partnership and efforts of Kip Kiser and Rich Little over the many years bringing youth baseball and soccer to so many youth in South Central Charlotte and acknowledged the true need for more field space for which they were advocating. Pearle Street Park, containing fields heavily used for organized youth sports by Myers Park Trinity Little League and Charlotte Junior Soccer, has met with some concerns as it relates to the proposed development in this area.

- The proposed development and the road connection from Baxter Street through Pearle Street Park to the intersection of Kenilworth and Pearle Parkway will take out a small portion of the park and eliminate parking in the parking lot of the Association of Realtors Inc.
- The Department is in continued conversations with the athletic groups to adjust their activities and come to an agreement regarding the future use of this park so that we can be respectful of future residents to the park and avoid potential parking problems.
- Work with Pappas Properties to make sure the road alignment is designed with the least impact to the park.
- Consider working with the Charlotte Housing Authority on a possible land swap that could provide us with more land adjacent to Pearle Street Park.
- Be prepared to present concerns and possible solutions for the current athletic activity at Pearle Street Park when the development plan goes before the City Council or the BOCC (as it relates to County park property).

**Commissioner Cox** shared with the board that in conversation, Rich Little had inquired if the PRC had talked about this or received any information, to which he replied “not that he was aware of”. **Commissioner Cox** said the PRC should have a role in the conversations around issues of this size. **Director Garges** agreed. There is much public process ahead for this proposed development and opportunities for the PRC to weigh in on the park design as well as the opinions of the athletic groups and that of the Department to ultimately bring a doable plan to the BOCC.

**Rich Little** shared that Kip Kiser had installed the home plate at Pearle Street Park over 25 years ago and wanted to publicly recognize him.

### **PRC Chair Report**

**PRC Retreat:** **Chair Powell** reminded the board of the PRC Retreat set for January 23, 2016 at Reedy Creek Park Indoor Shelter from 9 – 3 and informed the board that this would be one of their required meetings. The agenda was planned and put together by the PRC Retreat Sub-Committee and will include a facilitator, staff and Board of County Commissioners Fuller and Clarke. Prior to the retreat, all of the Commissioners will receive a copy of the Resolution Structuring the PRC to review in preparation for the retreat.

**2015 PRC Attendance:** Each Commissioner received an attendance report for the meetings they were held accountable for attending in 2015. All Commissioners met the 75% required attendance.

**2016 PRC Advisory Council Assignments:** Assignments will be discussed and made at the PRC Retreat. Attendance of the PRC Chair and Vice-Chair at the park regional advisory council meetings and specialty council meetings is part of their attendance requirements. All other PRC are strongly encouraged to attend their regional advisory council meetings.

## Consent Items

**PRC Minutes:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Bryant to approve the PRC minutes of November 10, 2015, which was seconded by Commissioner McMannis and approved unanimously.

**Correspondence:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Bryant to approve the correspondence consent items, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

**Advisory Council Minutes:** **Motion was made** by Commissioner Pruess to approve the advisory council minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

## PRC Reports and Requests

Commissioner Guinness asked about the process for having **events on greenways**. Director Garges responded to contact staff to obtain the proper permit and contract as required.

Commissioner Leonard shared that he had heard great positive feedback on the opening of the new **First Ward Park**. Commissioner Leonard also expressed his appreciation for the collaboration of the Department with the **Arts and Science Council's Culture Blocks initiative**, an effort that aims to bring cultural programs to underserved neighborhoods throughout the county, with programs being offered at libraries and County recreation centers. Director Garges responded that Terri Stowers, Director of Community and Recreation Centers Services, was running point for the Department on this initiative.

Commissioner Bryant welcomed the new Commissioners and inquired about the following:

- Asked if **Methodist Home** is going to undergo renovations? Director Garges replied that due to Aldersgate's development plans, the Shamrock Senior Center is going to move into Methodist Home and therefore renovations are needed.
- Asked for clarification on the February 17, 2016 **All Advisory Council Meeting**. Director Garges responded this meeting would take the place of the PRC February monthly meeting and would count as a required meeting. Its purpose is to get all of our Advisory Council members together to go over plans for 2016, but mainly to thank them for their service.
- Suggested that if Advisory Council assignments were not made at the PRC Retreat, it would need to be part of the March PRC agenda.

Commissioner Pruess expressed her appreciation to James Alsop and staff for their leadership on the Athletics Advisory Council.

Commissioner Johnson asked for a listing of the parks in the Central Region.

## Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.